

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 OMB-01 SS-20 NSC-07 SP-03

DODE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 SAJ-01 FEA-02 H-03 NIC-01

DRC-01 /114 W

----- 063467

R 071802Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0154

INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

EUCOM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: AUEW CALLS "INDEFINITE STRIKE" AGAINST COURT'S  
SEIZURE OF ITS FUNDS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN A BITTER REACTION TO A DECISION OF  
THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT TO KEEP CONTROL  
OF ABOUT 300,000 POUNDS OF SEQUESTERED UNION ASSETS IN  
PAYMENT OF COURT-AWARDED DAMAGES, THE AMALGAMATED UNION  
OF ENGINEERING WORKERS (ENGINEERING SECTION) TODAY  
(MAY 7) VOTED TO CALL AN "INDEFINITE" STRIKE, COMMENCING  
IMMEDIATELY. END SUMMARY

2. THE ENGINEERING SECTION'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,  
REPRESENTING ABOUT 1.2 MILLION WORKERS OF A TOTAL OF  
APPROXIMATELY 1.75 MILLION WORKERS IN THE UNION VOTED  
3 - 3 FOR THE WALKOUT, WITH HUGH SCANLON, AUEW LEADER  
BREAKING THE TIE IN FAVOR OF THE STRIKE. DEPENDING ON  
ITS DURATION AND SUPPORT FROM THE BRANCHES, THE STRIKE

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IS EXPECTED TO HIT HARDEST AT THE AUTO INDUSTRY,

ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF FACTORIES, POWER STATIONS, GAS AND OTHER ENERGY SUPPLY SOURCES, AS WELL AS NEWSPAPERS, ARE EXPECTED TO BE AFFECTED. (ELEMENTS OF THE OTHER THREE SECTIONS OF THE UNION ARE EXPECTED TO JOIN THE STRIKE SHORTLY.)

3. THE SPECIFIC REASONS FOR THE NIRC'S DECISION TO SEIZE THE AUEW'S ASSETS WAS ITS CONSISTENT REFUSAL TO PAY 47,000 POUNDS AWARDED TO A COMPANY, CON-MECH, AFTER THE UNION REFUSED TO END A STRIKE OVER UNION RECOGNITION, ALTHOUGH OTHER DAMAGE CLAIMS ARE ALSO OUTSTANDING AGAINST THE UNION. (THE AUEW HAS BEEN THE GREATEST SUFFERER FINANCIALLY AT THE HANDS OF THE NIRC - MAINLY BECAUSE IT HAS CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO AVAIL ITSELF OF THE TUC'S ONLY CONCESSION TOWARDS THE ACT WHICH ALLOWS UNIONS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES BEFORE THE NIRC. THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION, WHICH HAS A CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION AGAINST IT UNDER THE NIRC, HAS FOLLOWED TUC POLICY IN THIS RESPECT AND IS APPEALING).

4. COMMENT: WHAT HAS PARTICULARLY INFURIATED THE AUEW IS THAT THESE ARE VIRTUALLY THE VERY LAST MONTHS OF THE COURT'S EXISTENCE, SINCE IT WILL GO OUT OF BUSINESS AS SOON AS THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT IS REPEALED. THIS VIEW WAS ECHOED BY PRIME MINISTER WILSON HIMSELF WHO TOLD A GLASGOW AUDIENCE ON MAY 5 THAT "THE DECISION OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT ON FRIDAY PROVED JUST ONE THING -- THAT EVEN THE MOULDERING, PUTREFYING CORPSE OF TORY LEGISLATION CAN STILL SPREAD POISON AND DO HARM TO INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS EVEN AS IT FESTERS."

5. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR YET WHAT ACTION THE GOVERNMENT CAN TAKE TO COUNTER THE ACTION OF THE

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT  
EVEN WHEN THE NIRC DISAPPEARS, ITS CASES ARE EXPECTED  
TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE HIGH COURT. THE SITUATION  
IS FURTHER COMPLICATED IN THAT THE AUEW IS ALONE IN  
ITS DEFIANCE OF THE NIRC. GEORGE DOUGHTY, RETIRING  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE AUEW'S TECHNICAL AND SUPER-  
VISORY SECTION, TOLD US THAT HE EXPECTS THE STRIKE TO  
LAST ONE DAY, BUT ONLY BECAUSE HE ALSO EXPECTS --  
IN EFFECT -- THE GOVERNMENT TO PULL A MAGIC RABBIT  
OUT OF ITS HAT IN GETTING THE AUEW'S FUNDS RETURNED.  
IF THERE IS A LONGER STRIKE, THE RECOVERY OF THE  
BRITISH ECONOMY FROM THE THREE-DAY WEEK WOULD BE  
RETARDED AND THE EXPORT PICTURE WOULD DETERIORATE.

6. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THE AUEW CAN CARRY ON  
MORE THAN A TOKEN STRIKE ACTION AGAINST THE COURT'S  
DECISION. THE CLOSENESS OF THE VOTE INDICATES THAT  
THIS WAS NOT AN OVERWHELMING POPULAR DECISION, AND  
JUDGING FROM OUR LATER CONVERSATION WITH A REPRESENTA-  
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TIVE OF THE TGWU, THE AUEW IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE  
SYMPATHY FROM OTHER UNIONS BUT NOT MUCH CONCRETE  
SUPPORT.

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## Message Attributes

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